

BALTIMORE CITY DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING
URBAN DESIGN AND ARCHITECTURE REVIEW PANEL
MEETING MINUTES

Date: August 13, 2015

Meeting #211

Project: Harbor Point PUD – Wills Wharf

Phase: Schematic

Location: Intersection of Point and Wills Streets

PRESENTATION:

Michael Beatty of Beatty Development introduced Wills Wharf, a 12-story Office & Hotel Building, in context of the Harbor Point PUD master plan, the Baltimore waterfront, and surrounding neighborhoods. The overall vision seeks to establish Harbor Point as a destination, organized around a central plaza, with framed views to and from the harbor, a continuous public promenade along the water, and a series of outdoor spaces. Building character and material choices would vary throughout the area transitioning from more contextual (use of brick and frame openings) towards Fells Point to contemporary (glass curtain-wall and rain-screen) towards Harbor East. Mr. Beatty also expressed the commitment to activate the ground floor and waterfront edge by programming a variety of day- and nighttime uses. Wills Wharf would include Hotel Lobby and Restaurant at the waterfront side of the building and Office entry at the central plaza side.

Architect Todd Harvey of Beatty, Harvey, Coco Architects elaborated on the Wills Street building schematic design proposal that entails two masses – a 7-story, 100' high office mass intersecting with a more vertical 130' high mass with additional 4-story hotel above. The building would provide open and flexible floor plate for the office floors and a green roof terrace for the first level hotel rooms. Parking Garage and Services would be located subgrade under the building and adjacent green space to the east. Materiality for the two masses includes rain-screen for the office volume, glass curtain wall for the hotel volume and masonry base at ground level. The designers are exploring a glass fin detail for the south façade and a variety of colors and textures for the rain-screen.

Landscape Architect Richard Jones of Mahan Rykiel presented landscape design strategies for site circulation and building access that include a series of ramps and stairs to transition from promenade elevation to office entry plaza approximately 16 feet above. An increase in the proposed width of Wills Wharf resulted in 40' distance between the proposed building and the existing Thames Street Wharf structure as well as the replacement of a large public terrace with a narrower arcade adjacent to the proposed park east of the building. To the west, the landscape design schematic proposal includes a driveway parallel to the building, sloping down towards the waterfront, and resulting in a circular drive that engage the pedestrian promenade. A continuous ADA accessible ramp accompanies the driveway for access to the hotel and parking garage entries. The materiality of landscape includes brick paving around the park green space and wood boardwalk transitioning into tonal pavers and gravel. Other early proposals include native and adapted plants, combination of post lights and low-level exterior lighting fixtures and coordinating site furniture.

Comments from the Panel:

The Panel was generally complimentary of the quality of the presentation and proposed design and discussed the following areas for further study:

1. **South Plaza** – the panel offered several suggestions in addressing the 40’ wide portion of the plaza between the two buildings and underscored the need to reconsider the character of that area in context of the new proportions of the exterior space. Another concern included the removal of the public terrace as a means of transitioning between the Plaza and the building and suggested that the landscape and building coordinate a cohesive three-dimensional solution that integrates the adjacent ramp/stair system.
2. **Driveway and drop-off** – the panel was concerned about the apparent intrusion of the circular driveway into the public promenade as well as the suitability of the proposed geometry and symbology. Additional comments called for reconsideration within the larger context and with future phases of development in mind.
3. **Building Massing** – the overall massing was very well received with the suggestions to clarify the formal gesture by eliminating minor step-backs in the glass volume, evaluate the benefit of wrapping the glass volume ‘under’ the mass to connect to the hotel entrance as one move, and to investigate a potential change in the window opening within the rain-screen massing to differentiate it from the Morgan Stanley Building.
4. **Materiality** – the panel questioned the proposed green wall screening the garage opening and requested that alternative solutions be considered. The panel further urged the designers to study the material intentions of the landscape throughout the project and to develop an overall strategy for realizing the greater vision. The panel was generally supportive of the material choices for the building and expressed some concerns of how the building would relate to the surrounding buildings and varied materials throughout the landscape.

Panel Action: The Panel recommended Schematic approval to the building portion of the project and requested that the landscape design portion returns for a second Schematic review by addressing the comments provided.

Attending:

Michael Beatty, Jonathan Flesher, Jody Clark, Chris Mfume - Beatty Development
Todd Harvey, Peter Duke - Beatty, Harvey, Coco Architects
Richard Jones, Jeff Dube, Amina Mohamed - Mahan Rykiel
Natalie Sherman – Baltimore Sun
Adam Bednar _ The Daily Record
Ed Gunst

Messrs. Bowden, Rubin, Haresign, Burns, and Ms. Ilieva* - UDARP Panel
Director Tom Stosur, Anthony Cataldo, Christina Hartsfield – Planning Department